A

TESTIMONY AND REMONSTRANCE

REGARDING THE

MODERATORSHIP

OF

NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

BY THE

REV. JOHN BRUCE,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

THE DECLARATIONS OF SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE PRESENT DURING THE DELIVERY OF DR. LEE'S EVIDENCE BEFORE HIS MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

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A

TESTIMONY AND REMONSTRANCE,

&c.

It is with extreme reluctance, and from nothing, I believe, but a paramount sense of justice, that I give forth to the public the following Testimony :—

It was, I think, in the month of February or March last year, or at any rate during the sitting of the Church Commission in Edinburgh, that, returning home in company with my friend Mr. Waddell, with whom I had been engaged in ministerial duty, we met Dr. Lee accidentally at the head of the Cowgate. Whether it was our having just been engaged in visiting the poor that suggested the conversation which is now considered important, I do not remember ; but of the substance of the conversation itself I have no doubt whatever.

I distinctly remember,—because at the time it both surprised and distressed me, and because in the course of this intervening twelvemonth I have very often made mention of it,—that Dr. Lee expressed with great keenness and determination his dissent from Dr. Chalmers' views on the subject of

Church Extension. He spoke of his own fixed resolution to make an open exposure of them, and drew from his pocket a book, which he told me he had procured for that purpose from a surveyor of taxes, and by which, in particular, he would be enabled to shew, that the migratory habits of the poor had been very much underrated by us. I farther recollect, that my friend, Mr. Waddell, attempted to convince Dr. Lee, that the poor are by no means so migratory as he alleged; while I threw out the suggestion, that even if they were as migratory, or even many times more so, that would, instead of disproving Dr. Chalmers's system, prove much more impressively the great need of resorting to it. I do not think that Dr. Lee dissented explicitly and altogether from that opinion of mine; but he certainly expressed some doubts of it as debateable, and led me to believe that he looked upon it with dislike; and observing him still firm to his purpose of confuting Dr. Chalmers, and seeming to glory in his having obtained the means of doing so most effectually, I asked him to consider, that while it is proverbially natural and allowable for all Doctors to differ, it must be especially perilous in these times for our Doctors to dispute.

My conviction is, that at that time Dr. Lee was making no secret of his being as hostile to the views of Dr. Chalmers, to some at least very large and indefinite extent, as the most zealous of the voluntaries; and though I cannot pretend to quote his words, my general recollection is distinctly to this

purpose, that he spoke of them to me thus openly on the street, as highly objectionable, or rather as visionary schemes, betraying ignorance of facts; and altogether I felt convinced from that conversation, that he had set himself to the task, not only of establishing his own views, but also, and very especially, of confuting Dr. Chalmers', and had been rummaging everywhere for materials to aid him in it.

These are the circumstances which I feel constrained to publish. I have received from Mr. Waddell a communication from which it will be seen that his recollection of them accords with my statement, and I proceed now to prevent misconception regarding my own views of its import.

I wish then to state distinctly, that neither from that conversation, nor from others which I have either held or heard of, and which being of a more private, and more nearly confidential nature, I never would reveal without permission—from no information, in a word, that I ever received, was I ever led to believe that Dr. Lee is an enemy to Church Extension, or even a lukewarm friend. All I ever said or thought of him, in regard to this matter, is neither more nor less than I find him saying of himself in that passage of his evidence which appears in the statement of his own supporters, who have printed it thus:—"I have no favourite theory to support, and have engaged less than most others of my profession in the agitation of some of the questions which have lately been so

keenly discussed, *not because I think these questions unimportant, or because I regard them with indifference,* but because not being able altogether to agree with those whose general views I am disposed to prefer, *I have been unwilling to come into public collision with such as have a most laudable object in view,* while at the same time they may have adopted opinions different from mine in regard to the best method of attaining that object."

In this passage of Dr. Lee's evidence, as published and marked very emphatically by his own friends, I found a confirmation of my pre-existing belief,—namely, that he is zealous for Church Extension, but only in his own way, and dislikes especially that plan of it which the Church approves, and of which she has constituted Dr. Chalmers the guardian, because to him she owes it. This appears to me the fair and obvious import of that passage, even taking it by itself, insomuch that I never should have thought it necessary to confirm this interpretation either by the testimony which I have just delivered, or by the declarations which are here subjoined, if the supporters of Dr. Lee had not attempted to put upon it another and very different construction. But it is just because Dr. Lee's attachment to the Church, and to a Church Extension of his own, is unquestionable, that I look upon his proposed Moderatorship with suspicion and alarm. It is just because, instead of decrying all manner of Church Extension, he would zealously patronize something which is known to be different from the adopted plan of the Church, that I regard him at this juncture as more dangerous

than a Voluntary. Nor can I forbear from pronouncing it an exceeding great indiscretion in any one who knew of Dr. Lee's having expressed himself as in the passage just quoted, to have given out to the church, that he knew "Dr. Lee to be most cordially interested in the promotion of the great scheme of Church Extension *in which the Church is at present engaged.*"

There is reason to hope, at least, that after the disclosure of that mass of evidence which the Church Commission has been accumulating, the enemies of *all* Church Extension, will no longer be listened to. The general question will, we confidently trust, be held settled from that moment beyond all possible controversy. But who can divine what new controversies may be agitated about the special merits and demerits of the special scheme to be acted on, if we shall have called to the chair an individual with objections of his own, and these in his peculiar view so grave or so various, that up to this moment he has refused to co-operate with us, and that notwithstanding all his conviction of the necessity of Church Extension, and all his zeal for the Church. Grant that we have forthcoming evidence for the general measure, most urgent, and a government most favourable, and yet with a Moderator of such known and acknowledged singularity as respects his views of our particular scheme, the period of postponement may be extended indefinitely. Objections and difficulties, even were they in themselves of no moment, would be entitled to a fair hearing, because of

the authority, and the undoubted honour and the friendliness of the party from whom they proceed. And thus we might find, that after the main cause had triumphed, and our enemies every one of them had quitted the field, we had only shifted the controversy—that it had degenerated into a competition still more unseemly, and many times more interminable, between the Extension scheme of the Moderator, and the Extension scheme of the Church —and that the government, who never once had dreamed of arbitrating between other parties than ourselves and the Voluntaries, till we chose that Moderator, felt themselves then impeded by another obstacle altogether, having to weigh well and to digest all his difficulties, which would require so much longer time, if, as is too probable, the number of them was even then untold, and the nature and extent of them it might be difficult to define.

In all this it will be seen, that I am merely illustrating the ground of an apprehension which I suggested to Dr. Lee himself, when, on the occasion referred to, I spoke to him of the danger of internal disputes. And when his friends demand of us in their pamphlets, as they do somewhat exultingly, whether we would exclude a distinguished man from the chair, merely because, while cordially at one with us on the main and the grand object, he differs on certain points " regarding the best method of attaining it ;" I answer, that I certainly would exclude any man from the chair whose differences from us are in his own view so momentous, that he has hitherto stood aloof, because dreading to

come "*into public collision with us.*" And I would exclude such a man all the more anxiously, that, appearing in the person of Dr. Lee, no one dares despise him. Let who will blame the Government for demurring to the objections and the doubts and the difficulties of such a Moderator, I for one never should. On the contrary, should they dismiss *his* objections without canvassing every one of them after he was Moderator, I should say, that they had treated the Church, through her representative, far otherwise than they had any title to do . And if they did entertain them, I should as confidently say, that all the delay and the distress of an unseemly and everlasting wrangle upon points and particulars, however insignificant, the Church herself had to answer for, because having placed a distinguished man in the chair, who had warned us of his dread of "*a public collision*" with us, and who as her Moderator had acquired a right to be listened to on every jot of the controversy.

All this may seem to my friends on the other side quite visionary and extravagant: But I tell them in reply, that had they proceeded with more caution, both they and we would have been saved the pain of this most unedifying and no longer guiltless dispute. They plead that they were committed and had gone too far to recede, because from not happening to participate in Dr. Chalmers' fears when he warned them of the danger, they were not as free as he was to recall their offer of support. In this, I say, appears their extreme lack of cau-

tion. Every thing, since the date of that warning, has proved the solidity of that, in *their* view very slender evidence, from which Dr. Chalmers inferred the danger. And even if he had specified to them no evidence at all, can they doubt for a moment that the Church would have honoured them for deferring to his alarm. It was plainly in the tenor of our commission as the auxiliaries of such a man, that we should beware of doing any thing to discourage or obstruct him. And, without meaning either to doubt their zeal, or to depreciate the generous services, which, more especially, the reputed author of *The Statement* has rendered to the Extension cause,—I say, of all of us put together, that our place in that matter, is that of secondaries and subordinates. And it ill-becomes those to claim the pre-eminence now, and, talking lightly of Dr. Chalmers' services, to magnify one another, who know as well as I do, that there was a time, not long distant, when without his presiding genius, they absolutely could do nothing. They cannot have forgotten his indefatigable and incessant labours, and that too at a time, when having quite over-wrought himself in another department of the Church's exigencies, he came to her help in this, just because she herself had said, that under God, it depended on him. They cannot have forgotten how glad they were in those days to avail themselves of his unrivalled name and his inexhaustible energy, when, with one consent, they devolved upon him the whole intellectual toil of corresponding with, and memorializing and animating the ministers of a thousand parishes, because,

of all men living, he was best fitted to do it. They cannot have forgotten, for the whole world has heard of his enterprises beyond the church, when, not with the Legislature only, but with the Honourable and the opulent throughout all the land, did that most simple-hearted, self-sacrificing servant of Jesus Christ, task himself night and day to excite an interest like his own in the people's salvation. And knowing, as his accusers do, that though more or less directly, all our success is due to him, he has shewn himself to this hour, most unassuming in all his dealings with us, and as superior to all common men, in the simplicity and godly sincerity of his character, as in the gigantic strength and majesty of his genius, I ask if they are not ashamed,—I ask if they have no remorse at having most grossly insulted him, and charged him publicly with almost every thing which his soul abhors ; and that just because, seeing farther than they did into the hazards of the church's enterprise, and underlying a responsibility regarding it many times greater than any of us all, he braved not only the world's obloquy, but even THEIR IMPUTATIONS, rather than betray his trust, and suffer that cause to be hindered, by the postponement of which from year to year innumerable souls must be for ever lost.

I might enlarge here on the aggravations of the outrage referred to, but I forbear, partly because it will receive from other and abler hands a most thorough exposure, and partly also because I know that some at least *are* ashamed of having acted in this matter, so utterly unlike themselves, and I believe far bet-

ter of all of them than to question their having felt compunction. But it is not enough that they repent in secret, and that this one and that other tells me he has nothing to say. Justice and truth demand, and doubtless the Church expects that their retraction shall be as ample and as notorious as they have made the charge. And I trust they will not be so unfair to Dr. Chalmers, or so unwise for themselves, as to leave it to the leaders of that overwhelming majority of which they prophecy, not merely to appoint a choice Moderator, but to pronounce that censure which will then have been just rather long deferred.

In publishing these sentiments, I am at least not chargeable with any undue precipitancy, and having cast no reflection on the motives of other men, I shall scarcely attempt to vindicate or protect my own. For Dr. Lee, both as respects his character and accomplishments, I cherish still, as I ever did, great esteem and regard ; nor is there one man alluded to, to whom I feel otherwise than as a friend and brother. But from the very nature and constitution of human affairs, there must sometimes arise questions of sternest justice between man and man, which lie utterly beyond the reach of all statutory law, and for the attempted settlement of which, therefore, in righteousness, each of us in his place is held responsible. And believing assuredly that this is one of those questions, and that I have been called upon to do this much in regard to it, through the backwardness of several witnesses, who, in this as in all similar cases, have been deterred by

reasons, satisfying to themselves no doubt, from standing forth for the truth, I have endeavoured to do it, though at no small sacrifice of my personal comfort, and well-knowing, that it may provoke for a time some unpleasant coldness towards me on the part of several whom I greatly esteem. Nor can I think this resolute discharge of duty uncongenial with the exercise of the gentler virtues, when I read how it is written of the meekest of all the men that ever lived upon earth, that when he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, he slew the Egyptian, and buried him in the sand.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Edinburgh, 7th March 1837.

My Dear Sir,—In replying to your inquiries respecting the evidence given by Dr. Lee to the Church Commission, I have to regret, that my recollection of the statements made on that occasion is very imperfect and indistinct. I feel no hesitation, however, in affirming, in answer to your first inquiry, that the drift of the Doctor's declaration was, that the local or parochial system is inapplicable to large cities—that in Edinburgh, and especially in such districts as the Cowgate, that system is neither expedient nor practicable—that its impracticability is owing partly to the hopeless poverty in which the poorer classes are generally sunk, but chiefly to the migratory habits of the people, a great proportion of whom (I think he said two-thirds) change their residence once every year, and, in many cases, once every month—and that on these points he differed from many of his brethren, for whom personally he entertained a high respect. This appeared to me the drift of the Doctor's statement. It is possible I may have misapprehended his meaning; but sure I am, I have not, in the slightest degree, intentionally misrepresented his sentiments.

With regard to the bearing of Dr. Lee's evidence on the General Assembly's Church Extension Scheme, which I conceive to be the object of your second inquiry, my impression, when I heard it delivered, was, and still continues to be, that, if not intended to be decidedly hostile, it was at least calculated very seriously to interfere with its progress and success.

I beg to say, in reply to your third inquiry, that I recollect of having been distinctly aware beforehand, that Dr. Lee intended to give some such evidence to the Commission. Besides having heard it repeatedly mentioned by others, I had been more than once inform-

ed by the Doctor himself, who did not then attempt to conceal his views, that he was determined, before the Commissioners closed their proceedings in Edinburgh, to expose the "absurd" statements made to them by Dr. Chalmers a few days before. I met him, if I mistake not, several times, in eager prosecution of this object; and on one occasion especially, when in company with yourself, we found him, as you may remember, at the head of the Cowgate, on a tour of discovery, and, with a tax-gatherer's survey to guide him, exploring that dark and desolate wilderness, for the avowed purpose of collecting materials by which he might be enabled to disprove the statements, and confound what he termed the wild and chimerical theories of Dr. Chalmers regarding the parochial system.

I have only to add, in reply to your last inquiry, that if you deem my testimony of any importance, unwilling as I am to appear before the public in this or in any controversy, I feel that I should be acting a cowardly, if not a treacherous part in the cause of truth and righteousness, and doing injustice to that great and venerable man to whom the church and the country owe so much, were I to withhold it.

I remain, &c.

DAVID WADDELL.

To the Rev. John Bruce.

No. II.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. THOMAS WILSON, *Minister of Friockheim, dated Friockheim, 27th Feb.* 1837.

I am sorry that I cannot pretend to furnish you with any part of Dr. Lee's evidence before the Church Commission. At the same time, I have no hesitation in stating, that it was my impression when I heard it, and it is my impression still, that in its spirit and tendency it was directly in the teeth of the evidence of every other Churchman that I heard examined. It seemed to me to have an especial reference to Dr. Chalmers' evidence; to be, in short, just a kind of counter statement, by which, especially, the whole that Dr. Chalmers had said respecting parochial arrangements in large towns, was to be completely upset. But while it had this leaning, it bore upon the question of church extension generally. I felt, in common with others, that Dr. Lee did more to damage that question, than any of all the Voluntaries who huddled in their miserable statistics about the same time.

I believe that the few extracts of Dr. Lee's evidence which Dr. Chalmers has published in his Conference, give a most correct view

so far as they go, of that evidence. I recognise in every one of them, at least the substance of answers given by Dr. Lee, if not the *ipsissima verba*.

Now, my dear sir, if you think that this statement will be of any service, you are at perfect liberty to make any use of it you choose.

No. III.

Statement by Robert Johnston, *Jun. Esq. W.S.*

At the time Dr. Lee gave his evidence before the Religious Instruction Commissioners, in March 1836, I expressed my opinion of its tendency and bearing on the extension scheme, to a number of individuals, in a very decided manner; and having been now asked to state more formally, what my impression of that evidence was, I feel constrained to compliance, whatever sacrifice of mere personal feeling it may cost, by a sense of what I consider to be due to the one of the two parties, with whose impressions, notwithstanding all that has been said on the other side, my own still correspond.

I heard only a portion of Dr. Lee's evidence, on, I think, the 18th of March, and the whole of an additional statement made by him on the following day.

With the exception of the close of his evidence, he seemed to me to confine himself to a statement of facts in proof of the migratory habits of the poorer classes, without pointing out the relations of these facts to the questions to be investigated by the Commission; but at the same time I was convinced, from what I heard, that its tendency was to give an exaggerated view of the difficulties in the way of the application of the parochial system to large towns, and, in the circumstances in which it was delivered, to interpose obstructions in the way of the church extension scheme.

If there had been any doubt upon my mind of the injurious tendency of Dr. Lee's evidence with reference to that scheme, it would have been removed by its conclusion, when he left the loose and unguarded facts which he had stated, to produce their full effect upon the minds of the Commissioners, and avowed in language now before the public, that he had not engaged so much as most others in the extension scheme, and other questions, because if he had done so, he must have come into collision with those whose general views he preferred, since though they had a most laudable *object* in view, they had adopted *different opinions* from his *in regard to the best method* of attaining it.

If Dr. Lee had propounded his theory, and particularized all his objections to the theory of the Church, their importance would have been more easily ascertained, and the effect of his evidence, as it appeared to me, would not have been half so hurtful to the success of the scheme. I know that the evidence was anticipated by the friends of Church Extension with apprehension, while, by some of its opponents it was looked forward to with hope and expectation. It has since been frequently a subject of conversation, but I have only heard one opinion respecting it, except from Dr. Lee's immediate friends in the present controversy. And I must confess that I read with no ordinary surprise, statements from one of their number, to the effect that its nature and tendency were not injurious, but favourable to the scheme.

In farther proof of the impression of Dr. Lee's evidence upon my mind, I think it right to state, that while a few weeks before it was delivered, I had attended a meeting of several individuals, generally members of the Assembly, with the view of taking steps for getting Dr. Lee made Moderator this year, and concurred with the resolution in his favour; yet, after hearing his evidence, and being unable from it, or by means of any inquiry, to ascertain even the extent of his objections to "the Extension Scheme, in which the Church is at present engaged," my feelings with reference to Dr. Lee's appointment as Moderator, in consequence underwent a very considerable change.

ROBERT JOHNSTON, JUN. W.S.

2, SCOTLAND STREET,
6th March 1837.

No. IV.

Statement by P. C. M'DOUGALL, *Esq.*

As I have been desired to state my impression of the object, and bearing upon the General Assembly's scheme for Church Extension, of that part of Dr. Lee's evidence before the Commission for Religious Instruction, which I happen to have heard, and whether I had previously any anticipations of its nature and import, I feel no hesitation in complying, so far as my recollection will enable me, with this request.

The only part of Dr. Lee's evidence which I had an opportunity of hearing, was a long written statement which he read to the Commissioners on one of the days of his appearance before them.

My having been present at all on the occasion referred to, was

owing merely to the accidental circumstance of having fallen in, upon the street, with a friend who asked me, whether I did not mean to attend the meeting of Commission on the day in question, or had not heard that Dr. Lee was then publicly to refute Dr. Chalmers' previous evidence and notions respecting the applicability of the Parochial System to large towns.

With the nature of Dr. Chalmers' opinion generally on this subject, I was long before pretty well acquainted, and had even listened to a considerable part of his examination relative to it, before the Commissioners. I now heard this announcement with, I must confess, to say the least of it, very considerable astonishment, and determined upon immediately attending.

The impression, therefore, which the delivery of Dr. Lee's written statement produced upon my mind,—listening to it as I did with a strong feeling of surprise, if not of indignation—it is but fair perhaps here to mention, may, with some measure of justice and plausibility, be objected to, on the ground of previous bias. I can only say, that of his cordiality to the actual and specific scheme of Church Extension presided over by Dr. Chalmers, the impression which it left upon my mind was certainly any thing but favourable.

With regard to its *precise bearing* on the General Assembly's plan, I cannot, at this distance of time, so far tax my memory as to be able to give any very minute or particular answer. Nor, indeed, do I believe that I could have done so at any time, even had I been questioned on the point immediately after the reading of his statement was over, and that for some reason which I shall presently mention.

The main drift of it seemed to be, to demonstrate the great and frequent fluctuations of residence among the poorer classes, in some of the more crowded districts of the Old Town of Edinburgh; with, however, a sufficiently intelligible reference throughout, as I thought at the time, to the previous evidence of Dr. Chalmers on the same subject. But to what precise extent Dr. Lee himself conceived that his facts and statements were, if admitted to be correct, invalidated, or otherwise affected Dr. Chalmers' great general principle, I was utterly unable to discover at the time, notwithstanding every possible effort of attention; nor have I ever since been able to comprehend. His whole paper, indeed, seemed to me excessively confused, feeble and desultory. And this is the reason why I never charged my memory with the facts or the reasonings which it contained, beyond the time during which I listened to the reading of it. Having failed, as it did, to convey to my mind any distinct or satisfactory idea of its precise object and argumentative import, I was at no pains to retain it afterwards in my thoughts. Moreover, I exceedingly doubted at the time,

nor have I since seen any reason to alter my opinion, whether the author himself saw, with any tolerable distinctness, to what point he was tending, or what the exact value of his own statements was; and he appeared to me in effect, if not in express terms, himself to acknowledge the case to be so, by declining in person to gather them up, and compact them manfully into the basis of a tangible argument, and by leaving it rather to others to draw from them what inferences they might appear to them severally to yield.

What various and plausible constructions Dr. Lee's words may, by possibility, admit of, I cannot of course pretend to conjecture, for to these there can obviously be no other limit than the ingenuity of the interpreter, and the vagueness of the document on which he operates. For my own part, therefore, hardly any exhibition of dexterity in this way, would greatly surprise me. But this I will say, that I shall be very considerably surprised indeed, if the evidence to which I have referred, leave on an impartial and upright mind, the conviction, that it was not calculated, in a manner which could hardly have been accidental or undesigned, to operate generally against the scheme of Church Extension, which is at present recommended and pursued by the Church of Scotland.

P. C. Macdougall.

Stockbridge, *7th March*, 1837.